

**CLERK'S COLUMN**  
**April 2013**

It would have been nice to be writing a chirpy column about Spring-like things – about bouncing lambs instead of sheep being dug out of snowdrifts or rabbits running round meadows rather than being drowned in their burrows. Parish Clerks need a bit of blossom and bird-song outside their windows in April to cheer them up as they hunch over their recalcitrant computers, trying to meet all the deadlines imposed by a succession of laws from the 1880s to the day before yesterday. Between mid-March and mid-May we have to fit in an Annual Assembly, an AGM, the Audit, the requirements of the Budget, and stuff for the Inland Revenue involving a load of new software and all the baffling jargon that comes with it. Not to mention dusting off the crystal ball and producing a convincing set of figures for the Council's spending of their – or rather your - money in the year ahead. The Powers that Be have maintained their curious custom in Springtime of demanding rational responses to a complicated consultation that they have been brewing up during the dark winter days. Oh yes, and May is the election season too.

Well, some of that has been done and dusted and, no doubt to your relief, the Editor's deadline (tomorrow) has left no more grumble-room, but hey! the Annual Assembly turned out to be cheerful, forward-looking, and not too long. The Budget showed that some years of good housekeeping have left the Parish Council in a tidy financial position, without increasing the dreaded Precept (the little bit that's skimmed for us off the top of Council Tax); so we can be confident about getting on with all sorts of major and minor projects. All the sums to be scrutinised by the Auditor miraculously add up to the last penny. Most of the AGM's requirements are unchanged from year to year, so crafty Clerks can write nearly all of the Minutes before the meeting starts, the main problem being to prevent boredom leading to snoredom. The elections are for a new council for the County, not the Parish, so we're off the hook this year. And Ray Lucas has valiantly ploughed through the consultation documents and advised us how to respond. As for the on-line tax returns, though so far the instructions seem about as clear as a Beijing smog, well, we've got several helpful clued-up computerists around to deconfuse us.

And, Good Heavens, the sun's suddenly started shining! If you look carefully you'll see that the Prunus is pinking, the finches are chaffing, the neologisms are burgeoning, and at last the daffodils are whirling in a wild Wordsworthian waltz. No bouncing bunnies or leaping lambs in sight at the moment; are they all absolutely allergic to alliteration at Abbotts Ann?

*Adrian Stokes, Clerk*